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ADDRESS OF HON. T. W. MASON

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ADDRESS
OF
HON. T. W. MASON,
BEFORE THE
LADIES' MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION,
AT THE LAYING OF THE
CORNER-STONE OF THE CONFEDERATE MONUMENT,

RALEIGH, N. C., MAY 20, 1895.

Hugh J. Zoller

Compliments


Wm. James Day

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RALEIGH, N. C.:
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ADDRESS.

Mrs. President and Ladies of the Monumental Association, Veterans of the Confederacy, Ladies and Gentlemen:

North Carolina bids us pause to-day and consider the memory of her soldiers, those whom she gave to the Confederacy.

I know that you are busy with your affairs; that the demands of duty press upon you. I fear that disappointed hopes and failing fortunes may distress some of you; I am sure that the weight of years is now laid upon those who have survived their comrades.

Repeating the message of our beloved State, I entreat you to come away from your cares and sorrows to-day, and let us stand, with hearts aglow, and with uplifted heads, in the presence of our heroic past.

The day invites us. It is our Independence Day. It is our day of glorious memories. Now, and through all the years to come, it is our Confederate Monument Day. For this day our mountains have given their fairest treasure into the hands of woman, and she has brought this treasure reverently into our midst. Our brothers have taken it gratefully from her hands and laid the stone in its place. We watch and wait with swelling hearts. Voices fall upon the ear again that have been still since our camp-fires went out. We feel the touch of elbows again; our lines are forming; our ensigns stream above us; our bugles are calling. The stone which you have laid in its place to-day, my brothers, shall be lifted up; and, by its side and from its summit, he shall look into our faces again, our comrade, our brother; "bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh"; brave as he who followed the Eagles of Rome, or the Lilies of France,

our Confederate brother; he who was first at Bethel; he who was nearest the foe at Gettysburg; he whose rifle gave the last salute to the flag which was folded with immortal honor.

We have waited long enough to consecrate this stone. History approves and demands it. They who were our foes, but who are now our friends, ask that it be done. The passing years have laid their hands, in blessing, upon the head of our comrade, and deepened the halo about his name. If the courage of the soldier, untainted by evil purpose, is the noblest gift of time; if the memory of Grant is sacred; if the name of Lee is our priceless heritage, then have we waited long enough to dedicate this stone to the memory of the North Carolina Confederate soldier.

What moved him to leave his plow in the furrow that he might struggle, unto death, with his brother of the North? Was he not happy at home? Did he not love his wife and children? Had he not hewn from the forest his fruitful fields? Were not his barns filled with rich harvests? Had he no altars at which to worship? Had he no name or history to love and cherish? Was he not taught to reverence the Constitution next to his Bible? Was he a disturber of the peace, a hater of his fellow-man? Did not all the graces of a generous host adorn his fire-side? Did the sun, in his course, shine upon a fairer land than his? What moved him to leave his hearth-stone and go forth, with darkened brow and compressed lip, to struggle and die?

We know that no lust of power, no worldly gain, no pride of life moved him. He was never an aggressor. His keen sense of what was due to himself made him careful of the rights of others. So careful was he, so regardful of his acts, so cautious in moving forward, so contented with the portion which God and his own right arm had given

him that his neighbors bantered him for his homely virtues, and likened him to the good-natured Dutchman who was said to have fallen into such peaceful repose that he slept until the stock of his fowling-piece crumbled with decay at his side. And yet, our good-natured, sleeping comrade suddenly awoke to such deeds of valor that "the world wondered," and declared that he must take his place with heroes, while his neighbors were happy to share the glory of his deeds.

What moved this peace-loving, God-fearing, contented man; happy within the shadow of the vine that climbed about his cottage door, to go forth against his brother of the North? Let a true answer be given. Let it not be said, that in a moment of unreasoning haste, he tore asunder the ties of home and kindred and rushed, like a madman, upon the sword of his adversary. His four years of hard endurance gives higher meaning to his courage. Rather, let it be said of him that he loved the union of these States. The blood which flowed in his veins, unmixed with alloy, had warmed the hearts of the men who struck the first blow for independence. In the county of Alamance, hard by the old stage-road that leads from Hillsboro to Salisbury, a stone has been planted, and on it are engraved these words: "First battle of the Revolution. Here was fought the battle of Alamance, the 15th of May, 1771, between the British and the Regulators." Here, by this stone, was poured out the first libation to American independence. Four years thereafter, on the 20th of May, 1775, the listening ear of North Carolina heard the cry that the men of Massachusetts had been slain at Lexington. And no more, save from hostile camps, did the ensign of Britain wave over her soil. Then, it was enough for her to know that the invader's foot was upon the soil of a sister State. Can the sons of Massachusetts ever forget how the battle-cry of

Lexington was answered? Can they ever forget how they and the sons of North Carolina locked their shields until King George, on the 20th day of January, 1783, calling each one of them by name, treating with each one of them, declared these States "to be free, sovereign and independent?"

Let it be said of our comrade, that he loved the Union, but let it also be said of him, his proud lineage taught him that his own beloved State and her sister States were sovereigns. He remembered how those whose name he bore had refused to enter the Union, under the Constitution, until the sovereignty of North Carolina and the liberties of her citizens had been assured. In all the years of peace, while he tilled his fields and reared his children, he had been taught to guard this treasure committed to him with that supreme devotion with which the sons of Israel guarded the walls about their sacred city. In all these years of peace he rejoiced in the strength and glory of the Union as it broadened towards the setting sun. By the fire-side he had heard his sire tell of 1812, and of Lundy's Lane, and how he marched against the Indians with the warrior Jackson, whom North Carolina gave, with many other noble gifts, to her fair daughter beyond the mountains. He, himself, had marched with the Star-spangled banner and cheered it as it waved in triumph over the halls of the Montezumas.

Let it be said of him that he loved the Union, that he loved the arts of peace, that he loved repose, but let it also be said of him, his repose was never so profound that the tramp of the advancing host failed to arouse him.

In 1861, as in 1775, his sensitive ear caught the first foot-fall of the foe upon the soil of the State that holds the ashes of Washington. It was enough. The plow stood still in the furrow, the trembling wife held to his breast his

first-born, the unuttered good-bye was said with quivering lips and straining eyes, the door of his home closed behind him, and he went forth to battle. By his side, through all the fiery struggle, be it said, was one whose love for him was as the love of Jonathan for David, giving him strength and comfort, caring for the stricken ones whom he had left behind, guarding the honor of the cause for which he bled, and when all seemed lost save honor, leading him, by wise counsels, away from the sorrows of war to the victories of peace. We would that this one were with us to-day! How our hearts would burn within us to hear his voice, and look into his face again! But he sleeps well where we have laid him, with our love for him as lasting as the mountains that guard his resting-place—our great war Governor and leader, but, as we tenderly think of him now, our comrade and brother, Vance!

It was strange and terrible to see these men of the South and of the North shed each other's blood. They spoke the same language, they worshiped at the same altars, they had been school-boys together, they had shouted together in the shock of battle, and together they had filled the world with their victories of peace. No ray of light touched the glory of their country that did not fall, with its benediction, upon them both. And yet, above the contentions of the White and Red Rose, of Cavalier and Roundhead, of Bourbon and Jacobin, there was a solemn grandeur in their struggle. Can the Union live by force? The North answered yes; the South answered no. And this momentous question of government was to be settled in the stormy *comitia* of arms. Each thought he had "his quarrel just," and thus, thrice-armed, they strove. Two millions of the men of the North stood to arms; six hundred thousand of the men of the South stood to arms. How grandly they strove, shaking the ocean with the tramp of monitor and

ram, and teaching new warfare to the nations of the earth! How they strove, while the storm of battle howled up the valleys, and over the mountains, and across the plains, shrieking and hissing into the ear of the pale wife as she knelt by the bedside of her children and prayed for the husband, against whose breast the pitiless storm was beating! How they strove, while their flocks and harvests perished, and their homes grew desolate, and want and hunger came, and through the dreary watches of the night the widowed mother sat looking, with wan and weary face, upon the dying child in her arms, while the currents of its life ran dry in her aching breast! Brave women of our land, what tongue can tell your devotion! There was no soldier's arm you did not nerve; there was no soldier's couch of suffering you did not pillow with your gentle hands; there is no soldier's grave your love has left unblest!

If history shall say of these men of the South and of the North that they sinned in going to battle against each other, it will be sure to say also, that their rich offering of blood has opened wide the everlasting mansions of glory for the cause each fought for.

How did our comrade bear himself in this supreme test of virtue? Let us follow his shining lance, and see the grim face of war radiant with the sublime courage of the soldier. History startles us with its record: a military population of one hundred and fifteen thousand men; an army of one hundred and twenty-five thousand men! In all the annals of the earth is there a nobler record of heroic endeavor?

Let us follow our brothers as they pour over the James, thirty thousand of them, in the June days of 1862, encircling Richmond with their dark gray lines, near one-third of those who had gathered for its defense; standing with their faces to the North, waiting for the struggle of the

Seven Days to begin; waiting for Jackson, the eagle of the army, to swoop down from the mountain; waiting for Lee to speak, whose voice in battle was, to them, from that day forward, as the voice of a god; and when he told them to go forward, see how they and their comrades twist McClellan's army, with their stern grapple, back and forth across the Chickahominy, striking him blows of iron, day in and day out, until sore and weary, as the day closed upon the field of Gaine's Mill, he sat down and wrote to his government that he was beaten, and that his only hope was to escape from his fierce pursuers; and, five days thereafter Lee rode back from Malvern Hill praising his soldiers and regretting that he had not captured the Union army. See how they go, on the morning of the 17th of September, 1862, double-quicking from the right to the bloody left, at Sharpsburg, sweeping proudly into line, and staying, like a wall of granite, the torrent of battle, as it comes rushing in over the dead bodies of Hood's brave Texans; see how the foe recoils from the deadly blast of their rifles; see how they drive him back, with yells of defiance, restoring our lines, and standing in their ranks through the day, and through another day, as firmly as the solid earth beneath them. Read the record of their daring at Chancellorsville, the death-bed of Jackson, in the early May days of 1863: One hundred and thirty-one Confederate regiments under fire—twenty-five of them from North Carolina; ten thousand two hundred and eighty-one Confederates killed and wounded—two thousand nine hundred and forty-eight of them from North Carolina. See how they wave their torn battle-flags above the crest of the struggle at Gettysburg, as it moves along its track of death, up the slopes of Cemetery Hill, surging forward with the throbbing of their hearts; and when the fateful storm is over, where the crest of the battle rose highest, there lies our comrade by the side of him

of the North, whom the peace of death has made again his brother. As we look into their faces, side by side, the one clad in gray, the other in blue, each aglow with the spirit that has brought them thus together to the open portals of immortality, can we say of either that he has sinned? Shall we follow our brothers as they hold in check the unbending will and mighty forces of Grant, through the fire and smoke of the Wilderness, in the trenches at Petersburg, along the sullen retreat until the end came, and Lee bade them adieu, with his blessing, which has followed them, and made them, like him, patient and heroic in peace as they were great in war?

Shall we measure the glory of our comrade by the treasure of his blood? Then read this record: Fifty-two thousand nine hundred and fifty-four Confederates killed in battle—fourteen thousand five hundred and twenty-two of them from North Carolina; twenty-one thousand five hundred and seventy Confederates died of wounds—five thousand one hundred and fifty-one of them from North Carolina; fifty-nine thousand two hundred and ninety-seven Confederates died of disease—twenty thousand six hundred and two of them from North Carolina. Forty thousand two hundred and seventy-five sons of North Carolina gave their lives to the Confederacy—more than one-third of her military population; nineteen thousand six hundred and seventy-three of her sons were killed in battle or died of wounds—more than seventeen per cent. of her military population—while the average loss of the Confederate armies was ten per cent. and of the Union armies five per cent. Read this record of the Twenty-sixth North Carolina Regiment of Pettigrew's Brigade at Gettysburg, the conflict of the century: It carried into action over eight hundred men; eighty of them were left; and history has declared "this loss of the Twenty-sixth North Carolina at Gettysburg was

the severest regimental loss during the war," in which seven hundred and sixty-four Confederate regiments and two thousand and forty-seven Union regiments were engaged. Read the thrilling story of Captain Tuttle's company on the same field of death, that lost all its officers and eighty-three out of eighty-four of its men killed and wounded, and of Captain Bird's Company C, of the Eleventh North Carolina, of this same noble brigade, that lost two of its officers and thirty-four out of thirty-eight of its men killed and wounded in the engagements of the first two days, and these four who remained took their places in the historic charge of the third of July; and when his flag-bearer was shot down "the captain brought out the flag himself."

Near the town of Winchester, in Virginia, they set apart a soldier's resting-place, after peace had come, and when those of our sister State, who loved the memory of the brave, had brought thither the soldiers of the Confederacy who had fallen near their homes, lo! the dead of North Carolina held so large a space among their comrades of other States that this silent witness moved their hearts to reverence, and they sent here for our beloved comrade, Vance, to come and speak to them of these men whose noble dust gave honor to the soil of Virginia.

Shall we say of the Confederate soldier that he died in vain? Shall we say of his mighty struggle that it has no higher meaning than defeat? Shall we stand above his grave and declare that all was lost but honor? From the smoking altar of his sacrifice is there no incense to virtue? Does the world bless him, only, who wears a crown of laurel? Is there no beauty on the brow that wears a crown of thorns? Were the oracles of God lost to men when His chosen people passed under the yoke of Rome? Were the laws and language of Rome lost to the world when the Goth struck down her eagles? Was Cromwell lost to Britain when the Stuart came back to her throne?

The Confederate soldier has not died in vain. History will tell the story of his death and passion, that men may be lifted up by the example of his devotion to the memory of his fathers. If they did not die in vain who fell at Moore's Creek Bridge, at King's Mountain, at Guilford, at Germantown, at Brandywine, at Princeton, then their sons did not die in vain who fell at Bethel, at Manassas, at Richmond, at Sharpsburg, at Fredericksburg, at Chancellorsville, at Gettysburg, and on every field, where they sealed, with their blood the covenant made with their fathers that this should be a Union of sovereign States, with a government of express powers, limited by the letter of the written compact. For this covenant they died. That no sinful hand might be laid upon it, they took up arms. That no jot or tittle of it might fail, they drew the sword. The cause for which they died is not the lost cause of a dead Confederacy, but it is the vital cause of a living Union, its soul and strength, its only hope of future life, and without which it will dissolve and pass away like the smile of a dream upon the wrinkled face of time.

The Confederate soldier has not died in vain. The lesson he has left us is the only lesson that can save the life of our Union. When history shall call the names of those who have been truest to their trust in the ranks of war the men of the gray uniform will answer to their names and take their places in the world's Legion of Honor.

My brothers, the memory of your comrade will not fade. In the twilight of the years to come it will be as the luminous star which led the Eastern worshippers, where a new Life had come to abide among men long enough to teach them how to live like heroes and die like martyrs. The daughters of North Carolina will point our children and our children's children to that star. They will never turn their faces from the Confederate soldier. They gave you your battle-

flags wet with the dew of their tears, and in that sign and with their prayers you made the name of North Carolina noble. With each returning spring-time the grave of your comrade blooms out afresh as they lay their hands upon it. To-day they have embalmed his memory in stone. They have given you this token of their love, that shall not fail. Let us lift up this token of their love, my brothers! The light of the morning will bless it, the glory of the evening will hallow it, the patient stars will watch over it, and the calm face of our comrade will teach us courage for to-day and hope for the morrow.

Ye men who wore the gray, you who have been brave in peace as you have been strong in war. You have lifted North Carolina up in your arms and made her as true to our Union as the bride is true to her marriage vows. By your patience, peace and order and hope are ours. Elsewhere in our Union there is trouble. Social disorder vexes the soul of the patriot, and the cry of distress pains the heart of him who loves his fellow-man. Teach others the lesson of your patience. Teach them to right the wrong, as you have done, by the wisdom of the law, and the purity of its administration. Teach them to be true, each to his sovereign State, as you are true to North Carolina. And by this shrine, which her daughters have consecrated with their love, let us to-day renew our vows to our Sovereign Queen, the brightest jewel in whose crown is the memory of her soldiers whom she gave to the Confederacy.

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